

Message Text

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20

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-10 RSC-01 CIEP-02

TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01

L-03 H-02 DODE-00 PA-03 USIA-12 PRS-01 PM-09 RSR-01

GAC-01 /159 W

----- 034012

R 110931 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9481

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 3771

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, NI

SUBJECT: NWC CALL ON GENERAL GOWON

BEGIN SUMMARY. GENERAL GOWON SAID NOTHING NEW OR NOTE-WORTHY IN HOUR- LONG MEETING WITH NWC MAY 10, BUT SESSION OFFERED GROUP GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE GOWON IN ACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. AS HIGHLIGHT OF CURRENT NWC VISIT TO NIGERIA, GROUP WAS RECEIVED FOR ONE HOUR MAY 10 AT DODAN BARRACKS BY GENERAL GOWON. EXUDING CHARM AND HOSPITALITY, HEAD OF STATE OPENED MEETING TO QUESTIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER WELCOMING GROUP, BUT EXTENDED AND SOMEWHAT RAMBLING REPLIES USED UP AVAILABLE TIME WITH ONLY FOUR QUESTIONS HAVING BEEN PUT. AFF FOUR QUERIES WERE GENERAL IN NATURE, AND GOWON' S ANSWERS IN SIMILAR VEIN CONSISTED LARGELY OF REHASH OF EARLIER PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

2. QUESTIONS, AND GIST OF GOWON' S REPLIES., WERE AS
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FOLLOWS:

(A) ON FMG PARIORITIES, GOWON ACCORDED TOP PLACE TO EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WITH AGRICULTURE STRESSED UNDER LATTER HEADING;

(B) ON NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY, GOWON SPOKE VAGUELY ABOUT CONTRIBUTING IN MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD COMMUNITY, BUT DID NOT TOUCH ON ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS;

(C) ASKED TO COMPARE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN REGIMES AND TO DISCUSS PROSPECTS FOR RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, GOWON DESCRIBED MANNER IN WHICH FMG OPERATES THROUGH FEC AND SMC; INSISTED FMG WAS BASICALLY DEMONCRATIC GOVERNMENT WITH FREE PRESS AND HIGH DEGREE OF RESPONSIVENESS TO POPULAR WILL; AND RECALLED PLEDGE IN NINE POINTS TO RESTORE CIVILIAN RULE BY 1976 PROVIDED CERTAIN OTHER GOALS HAVE BEEN MET; AND

(D) QUERIED ON TRADITIONAL RULERS, GOWON EXPLAINED THEIR CURRENT STATUS AND EXPRESSED VIEW THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE UNDER BOTH MILITARY REGIME AND EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR.

3. UNLIKE LAST YEAR'S SESSION WITH NEW, QUESTION PERIOD WAS NOT FOLLOWED BY COCKTAIL HOUR AND NO OTHER SENIOR FMG OFFICIALS PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSIONS. OTHER MAJOR DIFFERENCE FROM 1972 VISIT WAS TOTAL ABSENCE ANY REFERENCE TO SUBJECTS ON WHICH GOWON WAS MOST ANIMATED LAST YEAR, NOTABLY SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES AND AID RELATIONSHIPS.

4. COMMENT: THOUGH LARGELY DEVOID OF SUBSTANCE, MEETING GAVE NWC GROUP GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE HEAD OF STATE IN ACTION. BOTH GOWON'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES EVIDENT IN SESSION: ON PLUS SIDE, CHARM, WARMTH, SINCERITY, AND EVIDENT GOOD INTENTIONS; ON MINUS SIDE, LACK OF INTELLECTURAL BREADTH OR DEPTH AND INDECISIVENESS IN HANDLING QUESTIONS. NET IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, WAS OF MAN RELAXED AND CONFIDENT OF HIS POSITION WHO EXPECTS CONTINUE PLAY MAJOR ROLE IN CHARTING NIGERIAN COURSE AT HOME AND ABROAD.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LAGOS03771
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730542/aaaaixeg.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Jan-2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <31-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980202
Subject: NWC CALL ON GENERAL GOWON BEGIN SUMMARY. GENERAL GOWON SAID NOTHING NEW OR NOTE- WORTHY IN HOUR- LONG MEETING WITH NWC MAY 10, BUT SESSION OFFERED GROUP GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE GOWON IN ACTION. ENNWC CALL ON GENERAL GOWON BEGIN SUMMARY. GENERAL GOWON
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IBADAN
KADUNA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005